

Meeting Minutes

Cedar Rapids Public Library

Board of Trustees

January 8, 2026

Board members in attendance: President Monica Challenger, Susie McDermott, Jade Hart, Elisabeth Hepworth (in person); Rafael Jacobo (via Zoom)

Board members unable to attend: Vice President Jeremy Elges, Chris Casey, Ana McClain, Hassan Selim

Staff in attendance: Dara Schmidt, Amber McNamara, Kevin Delecki, Erin Horst, Jessica Musil (in person); Patrick Duggan, Todd Simonson (via Zoom)

Others: Charity Tyler, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation; Libby Slappey, President, Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library (in person)

Minutes

- Call to Order
 - Ms. Challenger called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm
- **Action:** Consent Agenda
 - Minutes: December 4, 2025

Ms. Hart moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. Hepworth seconded. The action carried with unanimous approval.
- Public Comments and Communications
 - There being none, the meeting continued
- Foundation Report. Presented by Charity Tyler
 - Ms. Tyler reported. At the end of December, the Library Foundation announced a generous gift from the Robert & Elizabeth Allsop Charitable Trust. They will be honored through naming of the City's newest park – Allsop Park – and collectively, the new library meeting rooms will be named the Allsop Conference and Learning Center. Ms. Tyler is grateful for the family's support. Ms. Schmidt, Ms. Slappey, and Ms. Tyler are giving talks to various groups already this January. They have visited churches, PEO groups, senior centers, and a rotary club. Attendees have had nothing but positive remarks. The gala planning committee has secured more sponsorships for the donor event as plans continue to unfold. Ms. Tyler is working with library staff to coordinate the donor wall for the Busse Branch.
 - On Saturday, Jan. 17, Foundation staff will host Dolly Parton's birthday event to bring awareness to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) at the library. Programming staff and enrollment partners will host activities.
- Friends of the Library Report. Presented by Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Slappey reported. Recently, a Friends volunteer assembled 10 new book carts, which was a tremendous help. The Friends are looking forward to dedicate storage space at the Busse Branch as well as prominent sales space.
 - In 2025, the Friends were pleased to exceed their 2024 sales numbers by approximately \$40,000 for in-person sales and \$15,000 in Amazon sales. The Friends are planning a

blowout sale at the Cherry Building in order to sell books that have languished in the space. More will be shared as plans are developed.

- Ms. Slappey shared that the *Librarians* documentary will be shown on Jan. 24 at FilmScene in Iowa City. It will also air on PBS in February. The League of Women Voters will host a local showing on Jan. 10; contact Ms. Slappey to attend.
- Library Board Committee Reports
 - Advocacy Committee. Presented by Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hepworth reported. The committee did not meet in December and will meet next week. Ms. McNamara reminded the board that the legislative session starts on Monday, Jan. 12. An advocacy alert will be sent out as a reminder of things to watch for in the session. Ms. Schmidt also noted there are trustee recruitment opportunities in July as some board terms are expiring June 30. If you know of any Cedar Rapids resident who may be a good fit, trustees are encouraged to talk with them about a trustee role. Ms. Schmidt would also like to meet with candidates alongside the sponsoring trustee so the candidate can learn more. While the Mayor makes the appointments, the library can share thoughts and recommendations to the Mayor. Ms. Hepworth asked if there are any specific skillsets for new candidates. M. Schmidt thinks we'll discuss at this at the committee level and board leadership. At this time, she thinks it is more important for candidates to have a love for and appreciation of libraries, and we need more geographic representation of the west side. Right now, any particular professions and other skillsets is not yet known.
 - Building Committee. Presented by Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hart provided an update on the Busse Branch. This past month, contractors continued to work on indoor finishes, such as drywall and paint. Most of the restroom wall and floor tile has also been installed. The raised access floor installation has already started. Contractors are placing the support grid and then adding the floor pieces on top. The Children's Program Room is mostly done before they move toward the east end of the building. Built-in casework, such as in the staff break room and office area, has been delivered and installed. Other casework in the Children's Program Room and Allsop Auditorium kitchenette will be next. This month, contractors will install bathroom stall partitions and mount bathroom fixtures and accessories. Concrete floors will be sealed and other flooring installation will start. The City's Purchasing department will start the bid process for furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FFE) by approving the bid at the Jan. 13 City Council meeting. The bid includes shelving, new furniture pieces, and repair, clean-up, and movement of furniture we'll take to the new branch.
 - Ms. Schmidt noted that the Urban Plaza at the downtown library is officially complete. The re-poured sections have passed inspection.
 - Finance Committee. Presented by Chris Casey, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Schmidt reported for Ms. Casey. Officially, we have moved the money to cover the \$200,000 deficit for digital materials. The current budget so far is normal though it is slightly over in expenditures because of the movement but it will even out. Ms. Schmidt meets with the City of Cedar Rapids Finance Director tomorrow and will have more information on the FY27 budget process. Her hope is to present the budget at the February board meeting; if not, we'll have a

special meeting as it'll go to City Council in March. Ms. Schmidt also noted that we appear to be over on the land rental line item. As we have completed the purchase order for an entire year of Ladd rental, it is paid monthly and we will not go over. Ms. Hart asked about the timing of Ladd's rental ending. The lease has a clause that the contract will end when funding is no longer available as appointed by City Council. Once the FY27 budget passes, we'll discuss the lease end with the landlord.

- Personnel and Policy Committee. Presented by Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - Ms. McDermott reported. As a reminder, it is time for the second quarterly check-in for the library director's annual evaluation process. The committee will review feedback with Ms. Schmidt at the January committee meeting.
- Library Director's Report
 - Ms. Schmidt reported. The holidays have been the calm before the storm with the upcoming budget approval and the legislative session. This week, she participated in the Cedar Rapids Community School District Community Cabinet to support the school district as they determine their future ahead of budget challenges. Ms. Schmidt is proud of our library and the Cedar Rapids non-profits at the table who are there to support the school, staff, and students. She also reported that United Way is excited about statewide initiatives to re-invigorate early literacy and literacy community support. She'll share more as we learn more about our work in those initiatives.
 - As Ms. Tyler shared, Ms. Schmidt presented on the Busse Branch to a senior center this week. The presentation focused on accessibility. The group was really engaged and Ms. Schmidt held a 60-minute Q&A after the presentation itself.
- Old Business
 - There being no old business, the meeting continued.
- New Business
 - There being no new business, the meeting continued.
- Adjournment
 - There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:37 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library